

CONAN THE
BARBARIAN

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CONAN

THE BARBARIAN



barry smith

NIGHT OF THE FROST-GIANTS!

CONAN THE BARBARIAN™

THE FROST GIANT'S DAUGHTER

Robert E. Howard



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THE CLANGOR OF
THE SWORDS
HAS DIED
AWAY...
SILENCE LIES
HEAVY ON THE
BLOOD-
STAINED
SNOW...



THE NERVELESS
HAND YET
GRIPS THE
BROKEN
HILT...



HELMETED HEADS,
BACK-DRAWN IN
THEIR DEATH-
THROES, TILT RED
BEARDS AND
GOLDEN BEARDS
GRIMLY UPWARD...



...AS IF IN FINAL
INVOCATION TO
YMIR THE FROST-
GIANT, GOD OF
A WARRIOR RACE...



MAN, TELL
ME YOUR
NAME--



THE CLANGOR OF
THE SWORDS
HAS DIED
AWAY--
SILENCE LIES
HEAVY ON THE
BLOOD-
STAINED
SNOW...



THE NERVELESS
HAND YET
GRIPS THE
BROKEN
HILT...



HELMETED HEADS,
BACK-DRAWN IN
THEIR DEATH-
THROWS, TILT RED
BEARDS AND
GOLDEN BEARDS
GRIMLY UPWARD...



...AS IF IN FINAL
INVOCATION TO
WHIR THE FIRST
GIANT GOD OF
A WARRIOR RACE...



MAN, TELL
ME YOUR
NAME--

ACROSS THE RED DRIFTS AND MAIL-CLAD FORMS, TWO FIGURES GLARE AT EACH OTHER. IN THIS UTTER DESOLATION, ONLY THEY MOVE SLOWLY THROUGH THE CORPSES THEY STRIDE, AS GHOSTS MIGHT COME TO A TRYST THROUGH THE SHAMBLES OF A DEAD WORLD. IN THE BROODING SILENCE, THEY STAND FACE TO FACE, BOTH ARE TALL MEN-- AND BUILT LIKE TIGERS. BUT ONE OF THEM IS--

CONAN

THE BARBARIAN

--SO THAT MY
BROTHERS IN
VANAHEIM MAY
KNOW WHO WAS
THE LAST OF
WULFHIRE'S BAND
TO FALL BEFORE
THE SWORD OF
HYMDUL!

STAN
LEE
PRESENTS:
ROY
THOMAS
WRITER
*
BARRY
SMITH
ARTIST
*
ARTIE SIMEK
LETTERER
BASED ON THE
STORY BY
ROBERTE
HOWARD
CREATOR OF CONAN

Barry Smith

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CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE



CHOKING ON HIS OWN
GORE, THE VANIR-MAN
DIES AT CONAN'S FEET.



BUT NOW, A SUDDEN SICK
WEARINESS ASSAILS
THE CIMMERIAN.
THE GLARE OF THE SUN ON
THE SNOW CUTS HIS
EYES LIKE A KNIFE...
AND THE SKY SEEMS
SHRUNKEN AND STRANGELY
APART...



...AS HE TURNS AWAY FROM
THE TRAMPLED EXPANSE WHERE
YELLOW-HAIRED WARRIORS LIE
LOCKED WITH RED-HAIRED
SLAYERS IN THE EMBRACE OF
DEATH.



...AND HE SINKS DOWN
INTO THE SNOW.

THEN, A SILVERY LAUGH
CUTS THRU CONAN'S DIZZI-
NESS, AND HIS SIGHT CLEARS
SLOWLY. BUT THERE IS AN
UNDEFINED STRANGENESS
ABOUT ALL THE LAND-
SCAPE...

AYE, AND ONE
THING OTHER!

WHO
ARE
YOU?

WHERE
HAVE
YOU
COME
FROM?

A FEW STEPS HE
TAKES, AND
THE GLARE OF
THE SNOW-
FIELDS IS
SUDDENLY
DIMMED...
...AS A RUSHING
WAVE OF
BLINDNESS
ENGULFS
HIM...

THE WOMAN'S BODY IS LIKE
IVORY... AND SHE WEARS
A VEIL OF GLEAMING
GOSSAMER.
HER VOICE IS SWEETER THAN
THE RIPPLING OF SILVERY
FOUNTAINS... YET TINGED
WITH CRUEL MOCKERY.

WHAT MATTERS
MY NAME OR
BIRTHPLACE...

...TO CONAN
OF
CIMMERIA?

YOU KNOW MY NAME,
IT SEEMS... BUT I CANNOT
TELL IF YOU ARE
FRIEND OR VANIR FOE.

I HAVE
NEVER SEEN
A WOMAN
LIKE YOU.
YOUR LOCKS
BLIND ME
WITH THEIR
BRIGHTNESS.

BY
YMIR--

WHO ARE YOU,
OUTLANDER,
TO SWEAR BY
THE GODS OF
ICE AND
SNOW?

PERHAPS I AM NO
GOLDEN-HAIRED AESIR
-- BUT I BATTLED
ALONGSIDE THEM THIS
DAY-- AND EVEN NOW
AWAIT THE COMING
OF NIORD AND HIS
FIGHTING-MEN.

I HAD THOUGHT
THERE WAS NO
VILLAGE NEAR
THIS SPOT... BUT
YOU CANNOT HAVE
COME FAR OVER
THESE SNOWS,
DRESSED AS YOU
ARE.

LEAD ME TO
YOUR TRIBE...
FOR I AM FAINT
WITH BLOWS AND
THE WEARINESS
OF STRIFE.

MY
VILLAGE
IS FURTHER
THAN YOU
CAN WALK,
CONAN.



BUT NOW,
LOOK ON MY
GOLDEN
TRESSES...
MY LIPS...
THESE
ICE-
PALE
LIPS.

AM I NOT
BEAUTIFUL,
O MAN?



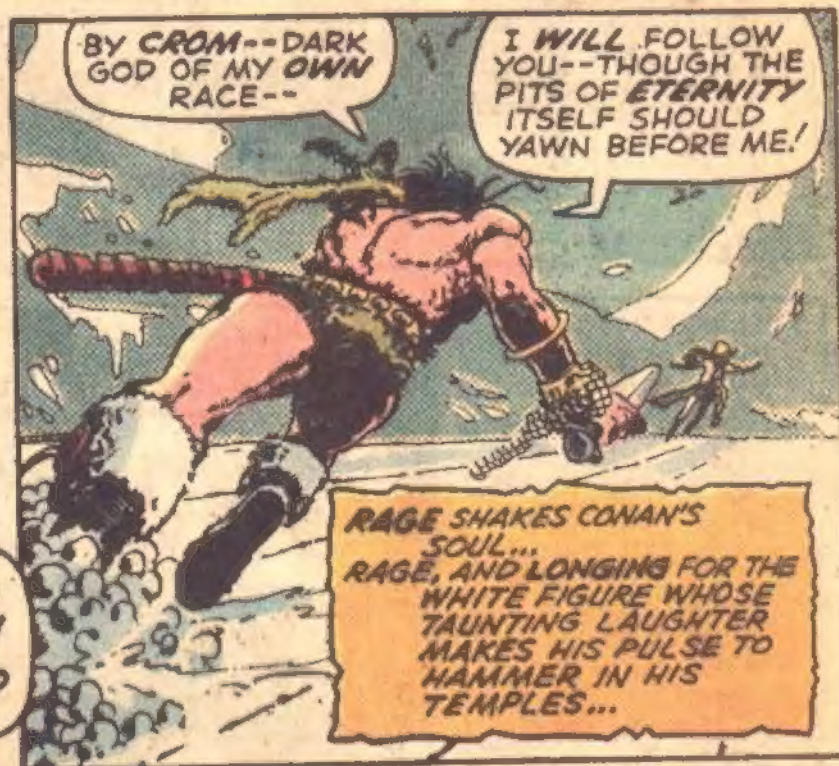
LIKE DAWN
RUNNING
NAKED ON
THE SNOWS.



THEN WHY DO YOU
NOT RISE AND
PURSUE ME?

HAN! LIE DOWN AND
DIE IN THE SNOW WITH
THE OTHER FOOLS,
CONAN OF THE BLACK
HAIR...

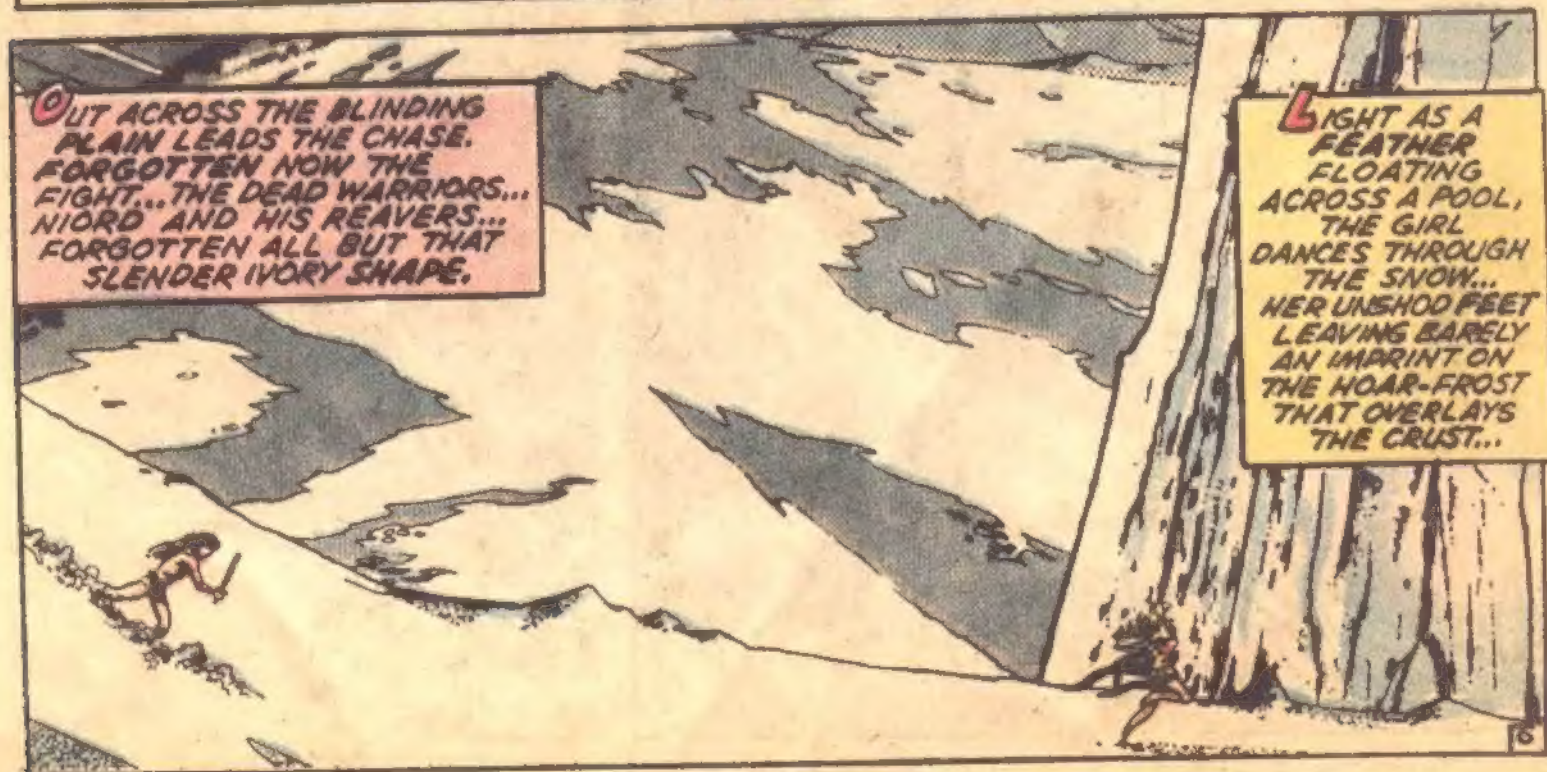
YOU
CANNOT
FOLLOW
WHERE
I WOULD
LEAD.



BY CROM--DARK
GOD OF MY OWN
RACE--

I WILL FOLLOW
YOU--THOUGH THE
PITS OF ETERNITY
ITSELF SHOULD
YAWN BEFORE ME!

RAGE SHAKES CONAN'S
SOUL...
RAGE, AND LONGING FOR THE
WHITE FIGURE WHOSE
TAUNTING LAUGHTER
MAKES HIS PULSE TO
HAMMER IN HIS
TEMPLES...



OUT ACROSS THE BLINDING
PLAIN LEADS THE CHASE.
FORGOTTEN NOW THE
FIGHT...THE DEAD WARRIORS...
NIORD AND HIS REAVERS...
FORGOTTEN ALL BUT THAT
SLENDER IVORY SHAPE.

LIGHT AS A
FEATHER
FLOATING
ACROSS A POOL,
THE GIRL
DANCES THROUGH
THE SNOW...
HER UNSHOD FEET
LEAVING BARELY
AN IMPRINT ON
THE HOAR-FROST
THAT OVERLAYS
THE CRUST...

...EVER OUT
OF REACH...
...EVER JUST
OUT OF
REACH...!



SNOW-DRIFTS...
THE COLD THAT BITES
LIKE A BLADE...

NOTHING
CAN HELP
YOU
ESCAPE ME,
WANTON.



LEAD ME INTO
A **TRAP**--AND
I'LL PILE THE
HEADS OF
YOUR **KINSMEN**
AT YOUR FEET!



HIDE FROM
ME--AND I'LL
TEAR APART
THE
MOUNTAINS
TO FIND
YOU!



I'LL FOLLOW
YOU TO
HELL!

YOU NEED NOT
PURSUE ME
MUCH **LONGER**,
BARBARIAN.

NO, NOT
MUCH LONGER
AT **ALL!**



THE **LAND** IS
CHANGED--AND
THE **SKY**--

IT BLAZES
WITH STRANGE
LIGHTS--AND
STRANGER
GLEAMS!

BUT NONE
OF THAT
MATTERS
--NOT AS
LONG
AS--



BROTHERS!
LOOK WHO
FOLLOWS!

I HAVE
BROUGHT
YOU A **MAN**
TO SLAY.

TAKE HIS
HEART--THAT
WE MAY LAY
IT SMOKING
ON OUR
FATHER'S
TABLE!



CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

THEIR MAIL-SHIRTS GLISTENING LIKE HOARFROST--A COLD, UNCANNY LIGHT IN THEIR GRIM EYES--THE TWO GIANTS RESPOND WITH ROARS LIKE THE GRINDING OF ICE-BERGS UPON A FROZEN SHORE--



--AS THE MADDENED CIMMERIAN HURLS HIMSELF UPON THEM--!

WHOEVER YOU MAY BE, DOGS--

--YOU'LL NOT KEEP ME FROM THAT MAN-TAUNTING WITCH!



WITH AN UNEARTHLY GROAN, ONE GIGANTIC FORM FALLS--

EVEN AS A FROSTY BATTLE-AXE FLASHES BEFORE CONAN'S EYES, NEARLY BLINDING HIM WITH ITS BRIGHTNESS--!



KILL HIM, MY BROTHER!



HE IS ONLY FLESH AND BLOOD. KILL HIM!

ALL TRACE OF MOCKERY IS GONE NOW FROM THE GIRL'S FACE--AS CONAN'S SWORD SINGS DOWN--



THEN, WITH A LAST SURGE OF GODLIKE POWER, THE GIANT LOOMS HIGH ABOVE CONAN--LIKE A COLOSSUS CARVED OF ICE--

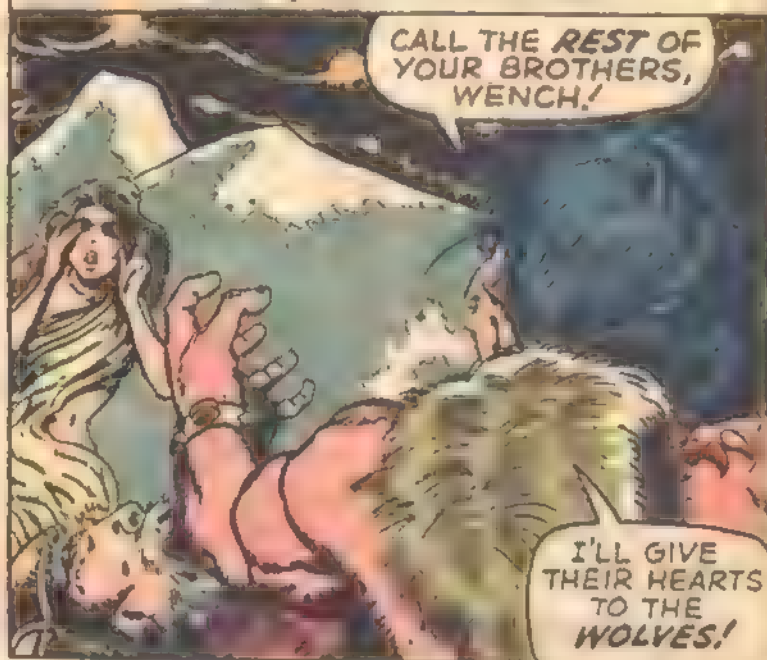
--AND THE REMAINING GIANT BELLOWS THIS TIME NOT IN RAGE--BUT IN PAIN--



--**A** COLOSSUS WHICH, THE NEXT INSTANT, TOPPLES LIKE A LIFELESS OAK.



THEN, AS THE GIRL STANDS TRANSFIXED WITH HORROR, CONAN CRIES OUT--



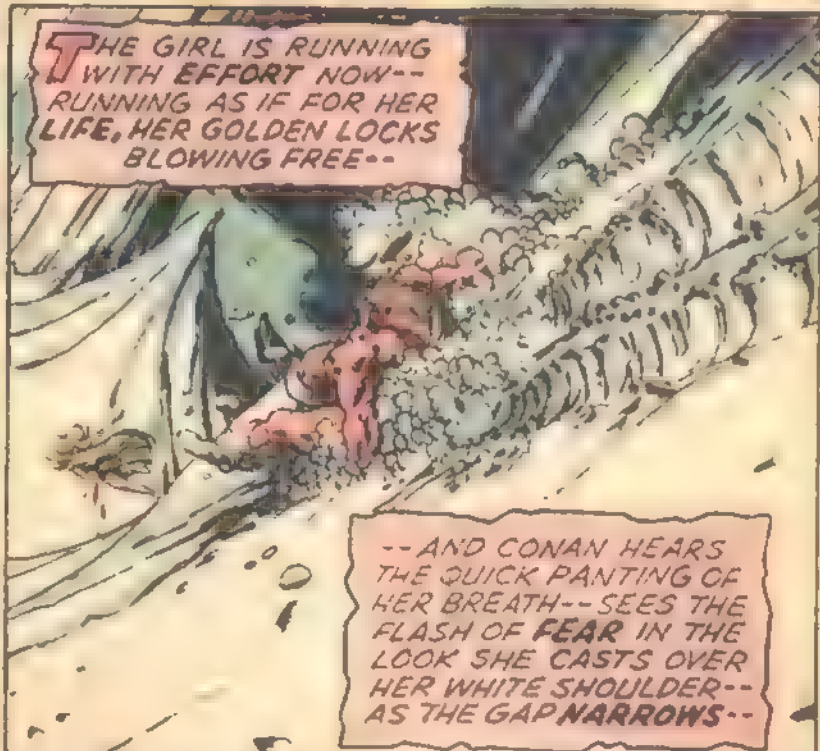
CALL THE *REST* OF YOUR BROTHERS, WENCH!

I'LL GIVE THEIR HEARTS TO THE WOLVES!

YOU CANNOT ESCAPE ME!

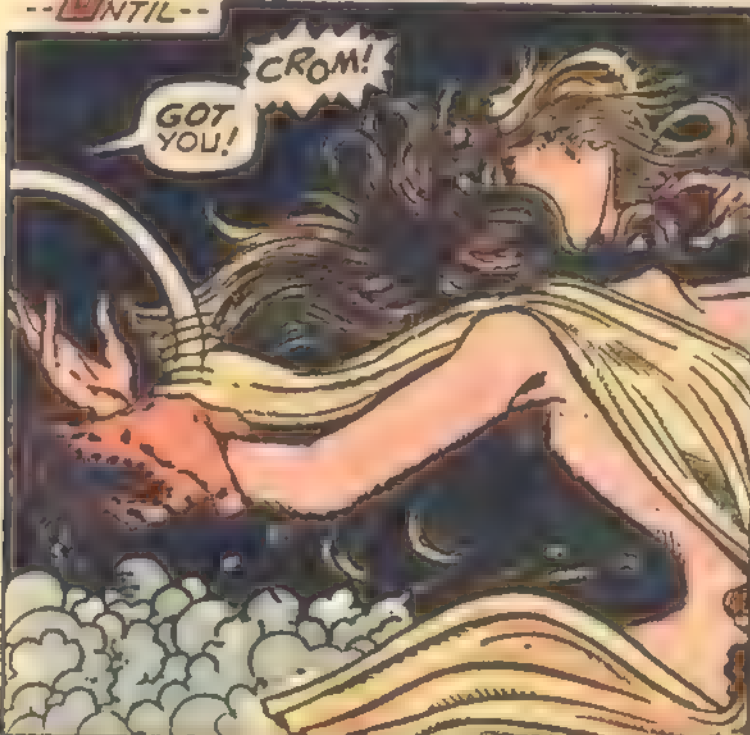


THE GIRL IS RUNNING WITH EFFORT NOW-- RUNNING AS IF FOR HER LIFE, HER GOLDEN LOCKS BLOWING FREE--



-- AND CONAN HEARS THE QUICK PANTING OF HER BREATH-- SEES THE FLASH OF FEAR IN THE LOOK SHE CASTS OVER HER WHITE SHOULDER-- AS THE GAP NARROWS--

--**U**N**T**IL--



GOT YOU!

CROM!

YOUR FLESH IS COLD--AS COLD AS THE SNOWS!

PERHAPS IT WILL BE LESS COLD--



-- WHEN WARMED
BY A BARBARIAN'S
KISSES!

BUT THEN--WITH A
SCREAM AND A
DESPERATE WRENCH--

THE GIRL SLIPS
FROM CONAN'S
ARMS--

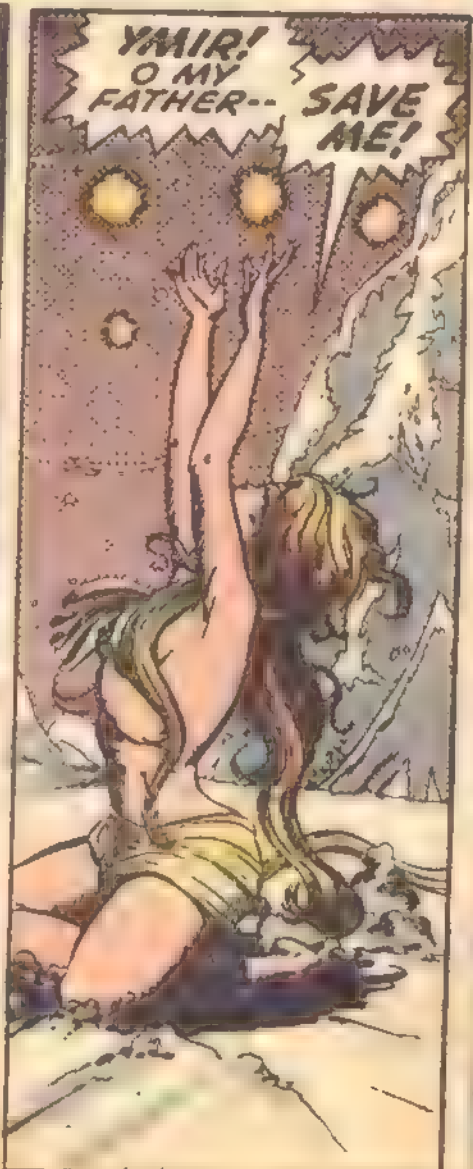


THE WITCH-
FIRES IN
THE SKY
WRITHE
EVER MORE
WILDLY--
LIKE
LIVING
THINGS--

BUT NO
MERE
BLAZING
LIGHTS
WILL
KEEP ME
FROM--

YMIIR!
O MY
FATHER-- SAVE
ME!

AND NOW, FOR THE FIRST
TIME, CONAN BEGINS TO SENSE
THE AWESOME FORCES HE HAS
OFFENDED--AND FEAR CLAWS ITS
WAY UP HIS SPINE--



-- AS THE
WHOLE SKY
SUDDENLY
LEAPS INTO
ICY FIRE!

**THE GIRL'S IVORY BODY IS
SUDDENLY BATHED IN A COLD
BLUE FLAME--**

--THEN SHE IS GONE.

**AND NOW CONAN
STAGGERS AND CRIES
OUT-- AS THE WITCH-
LIGHTS PLAY IN A
FROSTY SKY GONE MAD--
AS THUNDER ROLLS
INSANELY AMONG THE
REARING PEAKS--**

**BUT HIS CRY IS
LOST, LOST AMONG
THE TUMULT AND
THE TERROR--**

**--AS HIGH-RIDGED
MOUNTAINS
CRUMBLE, CRUSHED
BENEATH SOME
STRONG AND
WRATHFUL HAND--**

**--AND THE BLAZING
HEAVENS THEMSELVES
REEL DRUNKENLY-- THE
SKY A FIERY WHEEL
WHICH RAINS SPARKS AS
IT SPINS!**

**...AND THE
GIMMERIAN
CRUMBLES INTO
THE SNOW, TO
LIE MOTIONLESS...**

**BENEATH CONAN'S
FEET, THE SNOWY
HILLS HEAVE UP
LIKE A TIDAL WAVE--**

**...AND DEATHLY
SILENT.**

IN A COLD DARK UNIVERSE, WHOSE SUN WAS EXTINGUISHED EONS AGO, CONAN FEELS THE MOVEMENT OF LIFE, ALIEN AND UNGUESSED--AS IF AN EARTHQUAKE HOLDS HIM IN ITS STONE-CRUSHING GRIP--!

HE'S ALIVE, HORSA. HASTEN--RUB THE FROST OUT OF HIS LIMBS.

HE WON'T OPEN HIS LEFT HAND, NIORD. HE--

NIORD!

AM I ALIVE THEN--OR ARE WE ALL DEAD--?

WE LIVE --AFTER FIGHTING OUR WAY OUT OF A VANIR AMBUSH.

BUT--WHY DID YOU WANDER OFF SO FAR, LAD?

I SAW A WOMAN-- BEAUTIFUL AS A FROZEN FLAME FROM HELL.

DIDN'T YOU FIND HER TRACKS--OR THE TWO GIANTS I SLEW?

ONLY--YOUR TRACKS, CONAN.

THEN--IT MAY BE THAT I AM MAD.

NOT SO, CIMMERIAN!

WHAT? WHO--?

IT IS I--YES, OLD GORM--WHO SPEAKS.

I SAW THAT GIRL MYSELF ONCE, WHEN WOUNDED--AND LAY HOWLING LIKE A DYING DOG BECAUSE I COULD NOT CRAWL AFTER HER.

SHE LURES MEN TO BE SLAIN BY HER BROTHERS --THE FIERCE FROST GIANTS.

IT IS ATALI YOU SAW, STRIPLING--

ATALI, THE FIRST-BORN OF YMIR--ATALI, THE FROST-GIANT'S DAUGHTER!

BAH! GORM'S MIND WAS TOUCHED IN HIS YOUTH.

CONAN FOLLOWED A DREAM INTO THE WASTES.

YOU SPEAK TRUTH, PERHAPS, AND YET--

BY CROM!

THEN, THE WARRIORS SPEAK NO MORE--BUT STARE IN SILENCE AT THE THING WHICH STILL DANGLES FROM CONAN'S CLENCHED LEFT FIST--

--A FLIMSY VEIL--A WISP OF GOSSAMER THAT WAS NEVER SPUN BY HUMAN DISTAFF!

fini

THE SUN TURNED CRIMSON AS THE HARD-FOUGHT BATTLE RAGED...AS STARR THE SLAYER STRUCK BLOW AFTER BLOW TO SAVE THE CITY HE RULED FROM THE SCARLET BEHEMOTH WHICH MENACED IT! AND ON THE PURPLE PLAIN ABOVE MANY-TOWERED ZARDATH, THE EVIL WIZARD TRULL RECITED HIS MOST POTENT SPELLS...FOR, THIS DAY WOULD MARK THE FINAL ENCOUNTER OF...

THE SWORD AND SORCERERS!

BY ALL THE
GODS OF THE
GREAT
ABYSS!

MY MIGHTIEST
BLOWS HAVE NO
EFFECT ON THE
FIRE-BREATHING
MAN-DRAGON
CONJURED UP
BY TRULL!

YET, I MUST
FIGHT ON...
FOR THE CITY
OF ZARDATH!

STAN LEE
RE-PRESENTS THE WONDROUS
CONAN WARM-UP ORIGINALLY
SERVED UP BY:

ROY THOMAS * BARRY SMITH
WRITER ARTIST

READ ON, SWORD AND SORCERERS ONE--!

SUDDENLY, AMIDST
A BLAZING
BLINDING FLASH
OF LIGHT--

WHAT
UNSPEAKABLE
MADNESS
IS THIS?

THE MAN-
DRAGON HAS
VANISHED!!

AND--
IN ITS
PLACE--

YES, YOU BRAINLESS
OUTLANDER... TRULL THE WIZARD
NOW STANDS IN THE MONSTER'S
PLACE!

SO, SPEAK NO MORE TO ME
OF YOUR "MIGHTIEST BLOWS"
-- FOR THEY ARE AS NOTHING
BESIDE MY OWN POWERS!

JUST AS
YOU ARE
NOTHING BUT
A MOTE OF
DUST... WHICH
I CAN NOW
DESTROY!

MAY THE
NIGHT-SHADES
PROTECT ME!

THE MAN-
DRAGON
APPEARS ANEW...
FAR LARGER
THAN BEFORE...
HOLDING ME IN
A GRIP OF
IRON!

WHAT
WERE
HUMAN
CAN
WITHSTAND
SUCH
WIZARDRY?

NONE, DEAR STARR...
AND CERTAINLY NOT
SOME BARBARIAN
BORN SUCH AS YOU!

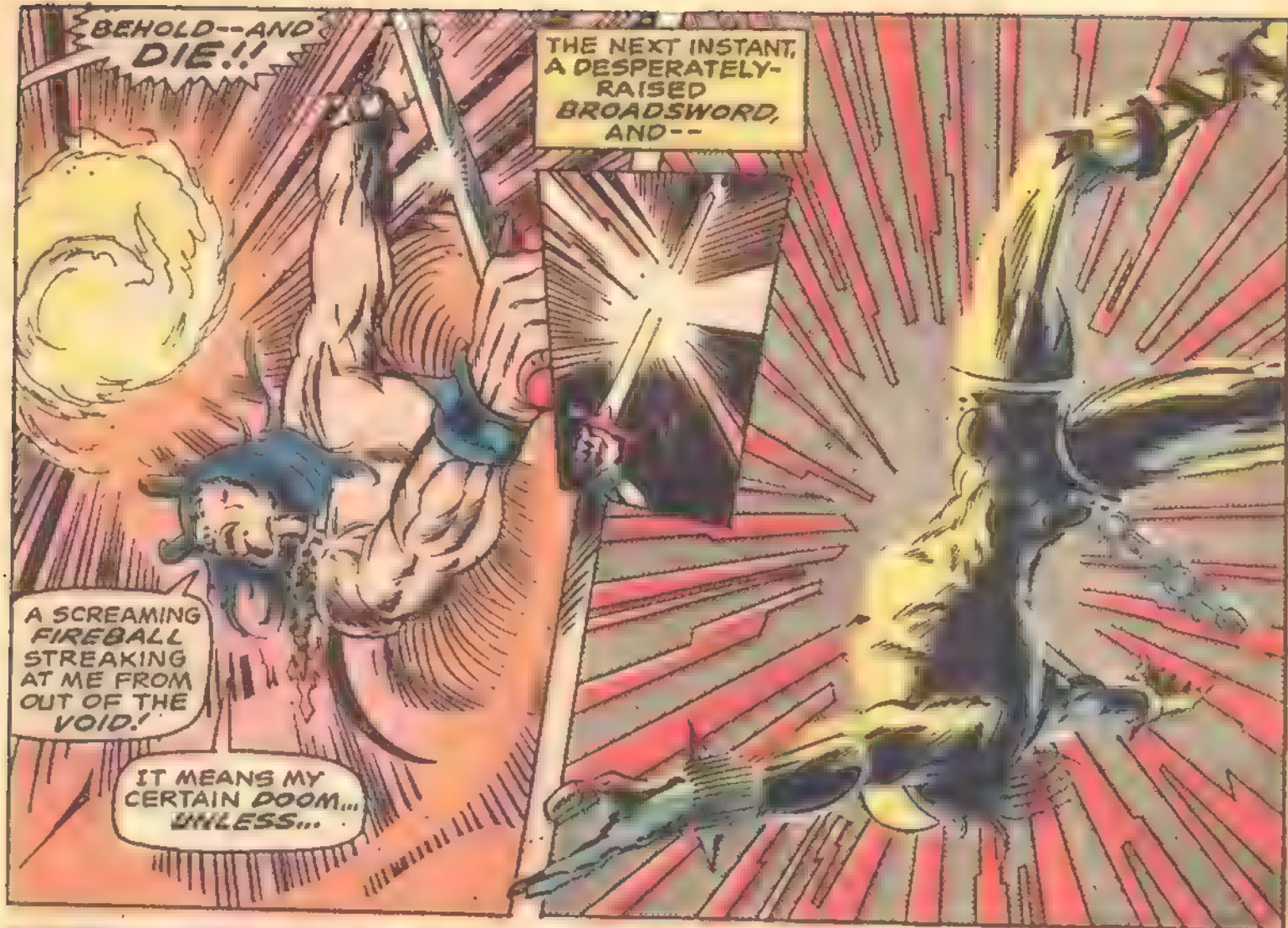
NOW THE PEOPLE
OF ANCIENT ZARDATH
WILL KNOW WHO THEIR
TRUE RULER SHOULD
BE!

SLAY THE
SLAYER,
DEMON OF
THE DEPTHS!

THEN DID THE GREAT-
THEWED LEVIATHAN
LIFT THE HUMAN
SWORDSMAN OVER
THE FLAMES THAT
ROARED ABOUT THEM...
AS A MAN MIGHT
HOLD AN INSECT...!

NOW BEHOLD,
SAVAGE, AS
AS I FORM
THE SIGN OF
CHAOS ABOVE
MY HEAD!

FOR, IT SIGNALS YOUR END...
AND THE BEGINNING OF
SLAVERY FOR THE CITY
WHOSE THRONE
YOU USURPED FROM TRULL!

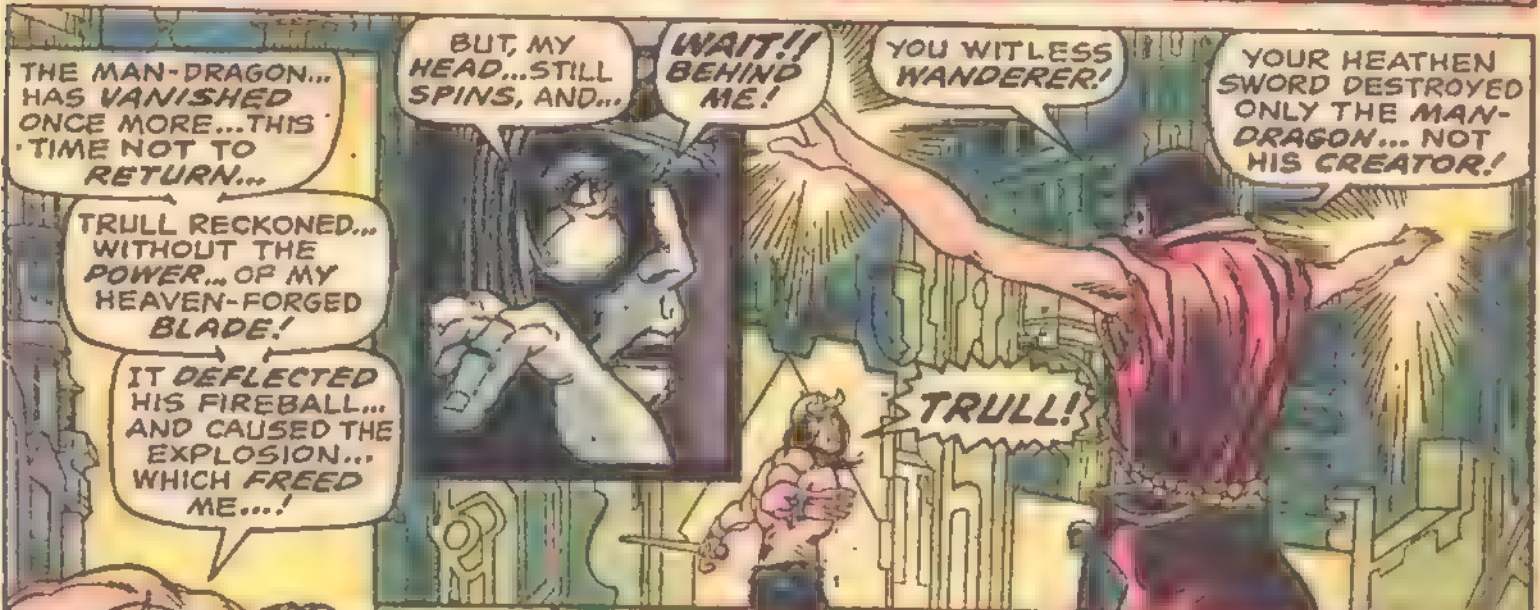


BEHOLD--AND
DIE!!

THE NEXT INSTANT,
A DESPERATELY-
RAISED
BROADSWORD,
AND--

A SCREAMING
FIREBALL
STREAKING
AT ME FROM
OUT OF THE
VOID!

IT MEANS MY
CERTAIN DOOM...
UNLESS...



THE MAN-DRAGON...
HAS VANISHED
ONCE MORE...THIS
TIME NOT TO
RETURN...

TRULL RECKONED...
WITHOUT THE
POWER... OF MY
HEAVEN-FORGED
BLADE!

IT DEFLECTED
HIS FIREBALL...
AND CAUSED THE
EXPLOSION...
WHICH FREED
ME...!

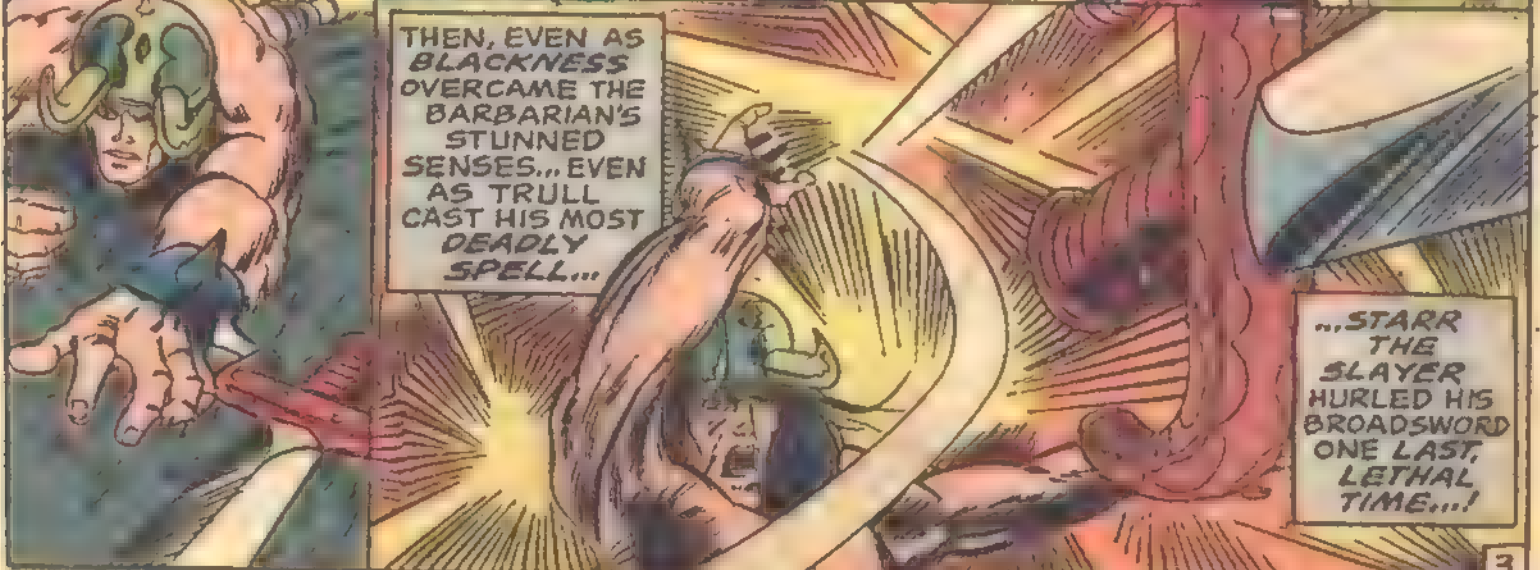
BUT, MY
HEAD...STILL
SPINS, AND...

WAIT!!
BEHIND
ME!

YOU WITLESS
WANDERER!

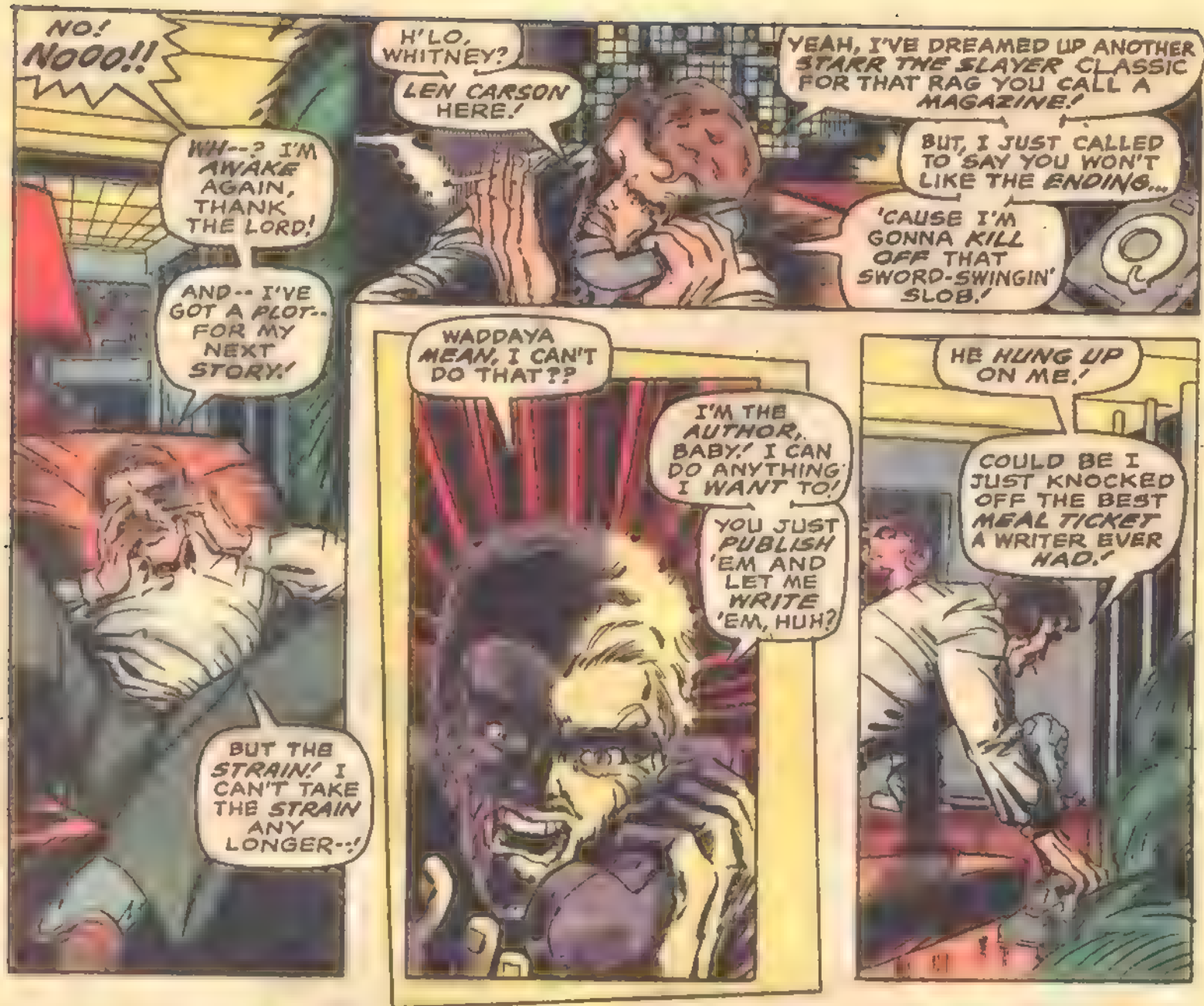
YOUR HEATHEN
SWORD DESTROYED
ONLY THE MAN-
DRAGON... NOT
HIS CREATOR!

TRULL!



THEN, EVEN AS
BLACKNESS
OVERCAME THE
BARBARIAN'S
STUNNED
SENSES... EVEN
AS TRULL
CAST HIS MOST
DEADLY
SPELL...

...STARR
THE
SLAYER
HURLED HIS
BROADSWORD
ONE LAST,
LETHAL
TIME...!



NO!
NOOO!!

WH--? I'M
AWAKE
AGAIN,
THANK
THE LORD!

AND-- I'VE
GOT A PLOT--
FOR MY
NEXT
STORY!

BUT THE
STRAIN! I
CAN'T TAKE
THE STRAIN
ANY
LONGER--!

H'LO,
WHITNEY?
LEN CARSON
HERE!

WADDAYA
MEAN, I CAN'T
DO THAT??

I'M THE
AUTHOR,
BABY! I CAN
DO ANYTHING
I WANT TO!

YOU JUST
PUBLISH
'EM AND
LET ME
WRITE
'EM, HUH?

YEAH, I'VE DREAMED UP ANOTHER
STARR THE SLAYER CLASSIC
FOR THAT RAG YOU CALL A
MAGAZINE!

BUT, I JUST CALLED
TO SAY YOU WON'T
LIKE THE ENDING...

'CAUSE I'M
GONNA KILL
OFF THAT
SWORD-SWINGIN'
SLOB!

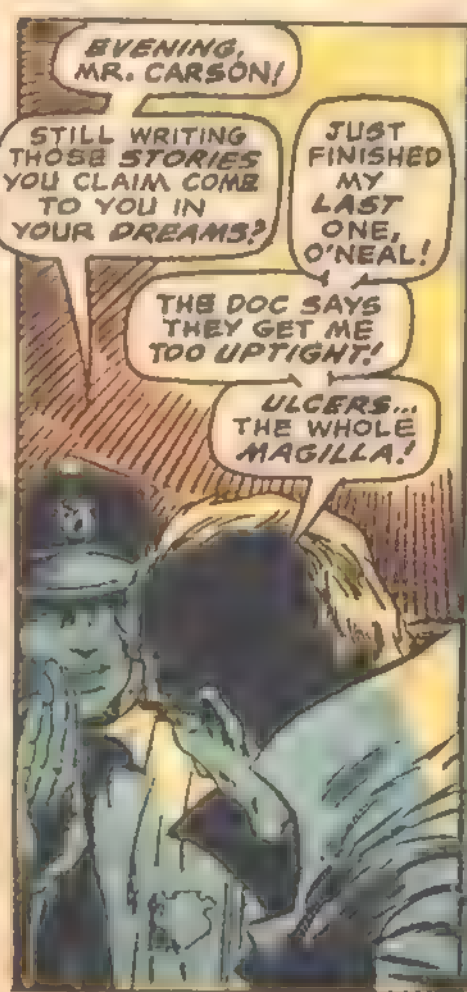
HE HUNG UP
ON ME!

COULD BE I
JUST KNOCKED
OFF THE BEST
MEAL TICKET
A WRITER EVER
HAD!



A FEW HOURS OF
FRANTIC TYPING
LATER...

WELL, I
MIGHT AS
WELL MAIL
IN MY SWORD-
AND-SORCERY
SWAN
SONG!



EVENING,
MR. CARSON!

STILL WRITING
THOSE STORIES
YOU CLAIM COME
TO YOU IN
YOUR DREAMS?

JUST
FINISHED
MY
LAST
ONE,
O'NEAL!

THE DOC SAYS
THEY GET ME
TOO UPTIGHT!

ULCERS...
THE WHOLE
MAGILLA!



SORRY TO HEAR THAT!

I READ ONE
OF 'EM THE
OTHER DAY!

THEY WERE
GOOD...
REAL
GOOD!

YEAH...
GOOD
ENOUGH
TO KNOCK
ME OUTTA
MY
GOURD!

ANOTHER
NIGHTMARE
LIKE
TONIGHT'S
...AND I'D
GO
BANANAS!

SPECIAL SURPRISE NOTE:

Since our dramatic announcement last time around that Barry Smith had asked to be relieved from duty on CONAN, we're overjoyed to say he's had a change of heart! Thus, although the next two issues have indeed been artfully penciled by galvanizin' Gil Kane, by CONAN #19 our talented young Britisher should be back at the artistic helm of comidom's first and foremost sword-and-sorcery strip in the classic tradition!

Meanwhile, for a multitude of reasons, we've decided to reprint—if that's the proper word for it—Roy and Barry's powerful adaptation of REH's "The Frost Giant's Daughter," which occurs on one of the Cimmerian's many trips back to the frozen North. We hope those of you who were lucky enough to find a copy of our late lamented black-and-white magazine SAVAGE TALES will enjoy seeing it in full color this time; and if you didn't scrounge up a copy of S.T. #1-and-only, well then—what are we worried about?

So stick around, swashbuckler—we're back on a monthly schedule, KULL THE CONQUEROR is alive and well, Solomon Kane is coming soon, and the end is nowhere in sight!

Roy and Barry.

"The Dweller in the Dark" is probably the most important story yet to appear in the series, and surely it will cause a degree of controversy. For, in this issue, for the very first time, you showed Conan cold-bloodedly murdering someone when his life was not in immediate danger. This "someone" was a woman, no less. I'm referring to the startling sequence wherein Conan dumps Queen Fatima into the Dweller's pit. This was not only the most deliberately grisly thing I've ever seen in a comic, but it was probably the most hard-hearted act ever performed by Conan in any of the stories in which he has appeared, either in comics or paperback. I'm sure many of the fans who counsel you to follow the Conan saga as set down by Howard disapproved of this incident. After all, up until now, much has been made of Conan's roughly chivalric "code" regarding women. You guys blew that whole routine to bits in just one page, and I guess there were some complaints. For my part, I thought it the most exciting and innovative stroke yet displayed by you two. You've proven that Conan's urge to survive is so strong that he'll kill anyone if his own life depends on it. His enemies, whether male or female, are enemies nonetheless, and subject to Conan's fast and furious wrath. You've made him more of a barbarian than even Howard did, and you've certainly improved on the diluted version offered by deCamp and Carter.

Other aspects of "The Dweller in the Dark" deserve praise. For one thing, it was a masterpiece of economy—a fully developed and wildly exciting fantasy yarn neatly wrapped up in fifteen pages. The pacing was beyond reproach and the dialogue, as usual, was better than the usual sword-and-sorcery fare. In my opinion, only Fritz Leiber, of all the various American fantasists, matches Roy's ability to put witty, character-revealing words in the mouths of his characters.

The artwork was the best so far, Barry's inking being nothing short of miraculous. The appearance of the Dweller on page ten was so awesome as to be worth more than the price of the magazine all by itself. Barry has captured the eerie essence of Howardian creatures as perhaps no other artist would be able to. The expression on the Dweller's face was nightmarish. And the anatomical detail and pale coloring (which was brilliant throughout—who did it?) made this monster so convincing that it seemed highly possible that he might slither right up off the printed page.

There was little caption narration during the ensuing battle, and this was all to the good, since in the past you've cluttered up quite a few fights with almost irrelevant narration. The dialogue during the fight was mostly very good, though the first panel on page 12 was

a bit too cute. I don't think Conan, while being squeezed to death, would have taken the time to sarcastically answer Yaila's screaming. That's a minor point, though, and I suppose it's just a matter of personal taste; certainly it didn't in the least detract from this remarkable and startlingly blood-stained issue.

Tom Steinke, 87 Udalia Ct.
West Islip, N.Y. 11795

Not that Roy and Barry went out of their way to make CONAN #12 more savage than usual, Tom—they just do what comes naturally and let the action take care of itself—but they're glad you and other Conan-watchers dug it.

Maybe a few belated words about "The Dweller in the Dark" are in order, for the kind of person who'd rather watch a play from behind the stage than in front of it: "The Dweller in the Dark" was originally planned for our black-and-white SAVAGE TALES (#2). Interestingly, because bashful Barry was still in his native England at the time, it was necessary for him both to pencil and ink the story before mailing it to our unabashed author, who had of course plotted the tale in the first place. Each word-balloon and caption was then pasted lovingly in place by our peerless production department.

Unfortunately, because of various differences between preparing material for color comic-books and for black-and-white magazines, we feel the reproduction of the story in CONAN #12 was considerably poorer than usual. In other words, people, if you noticed a slight fuzziness in certain aspects of the art that issue, you'll have to take our word—and Tom Steinke's—for it that the artwork was some of Barry's best to date!

Hopefully, the repro on this semi-reprint of the Conan tale in SAVAGE TALES #1 has fared better because the beleaguered Bullpen had more time to work on it.

Incidentally, both stories this ish were colored by Barry himself. Sheesh—whatever happened to all the mystery concerning who did what in a comic-book, anyhow?

And now, here are a few briefer comments on the more controversial aspects of our rapturously-received dozenth issue:

Gentlemen:

In issue #12 Roy Thomas has Conan deliberately kill a woman, Queen Fatima. Anyone who has read all the Conan text stories will tell you that Conan's "code of honor," acquired from his barbarian parents and fellows, forbids his killing a woman, except to spare her great suffering. I will admit this is rather imprudent on occasion, especially if the woman he will not kill has no scruples against killing him, but Conan will not kill a woman in cold blood. Dumping Jenna into a cesspool was more his style; he might have used Fatima as a shield so that he and Yaila could escape, but he would never have dropped her down to the Dweller in the Dark. Please—read Howard's own stories, learn from them, and never make a goof like this again!

Jeffrey May, 1603 E. Division
Springfield, Mo. 65803

We've said it before and we've gotta say it again: Roy has read each Conan tale at least once, and most of them more often than that. He is and was as aware as anyone that Conan has what has been described as a "roughly chivalric code toward woman"—and maybe, just maybe, Roy goofed on the occasion in question, though fellow-correspondent Tom Steinke seems to feel just the opposite.

Tell you what, Jeff, we'll make a deal with you: If you can supply us with an actual Robert E. Howard quote (not just internal evidence, but an honest-to-Crom quote) to back up your allegation that Conan's code forbids him to kill a woman, Roy for his part will admit that he should have plotted the tale differently. We're not saying there isn't such a quote, but surely Roy has a family right to be a—er—"doubting Thomas."

(An unabashed aside: Even as things stand, Roy admits that he wishes he had worded Conan's dialogue instead so that he didn't say he "killed" her—but rather that he had merely dropped her into the pit, and that if she could swim faster than the Dweller, she was safe. If not, well...)

I GOT
KIND OF
ATTACHED
TO OL'
STARR,
THOUGH!

FUNNY... I
CAN'T HELP
FEELING
A BIT LIKE
A--

MURDERER!!

WHAT??

WHO
IN THE
DEVIL--?

PERHAPS YOU CAN
SEE ME BETTER IF
I STEP INTO THE
LIGHT, VILLAIN!

**YOU--
STARR!**

BUT-- I CREATED
YOU-- GAVE YOU
LIFE--!

YOU'RE NOT
REAL!!

NO, EVIL
ONE?

THEN,
STAND YOU
STILL... FOR A
PHANTOM BLADE
CAN SCARCELY
HARM YOU!

AYE, ASSASSIN...
IT IS STARR THE
SLAYER WHO
STANDS BEFORE
YOU!

HE WHOM YOU
MEAN TO DESTROY--
BUT WHO SHALL
SLAY YOU
INSTEAD!

BUT SOON,
YOU SHALL DODGE
MY BITING SWORD
NO LONGER--
--AND THEN--

HAN! I SEE YOU
HAVE NOT COURAGE
TO TEST YOUR
FINE WORDS,
WIZARD!

W-WAIT!
YOU--
CALLED ME
WIZARD!

BUT, IT WAS TRULL
WHO WAS YOUR
MAGICAL ENEMY--
NOT I!

LIAR!

YOU ARE FAR WORSE-- FAR MORE DANGEROUS EVEN THAN TRULL!

ONE MOMENT, I BATTLED TRULL NEAR THE CITY I ONCE WRESTED FROM HIS CORRUPT GRIP!

BUT, IT IS I WHO AM CALLED... THE SLAYER!

COULD HE HAVE SUMMONED ME HERE, TO A LAND WHOSE TITAN TOWERS DWARF EVEN THOSE OF MIGHTY ZARDATH?

THE NEXT, I STOOD AMIDST THESE MINARETS OF BLAZING CRYSTAL--

--AND SENSED THAT YOU HAD BROUGHT ME HERE-- TO SLAY ME!

NO! I-- I DREAMED YOU UP, I TELL YOU! LOOK! LOOK AT THIS PAPER!

BAH! YOUR STRANGE SYMBOLS MEAN NOTHING TO STARR!

AND NOW-- PREPARE TO DIE, ASSASSIN!

BUT-- I CREATED YOU-- AND I MADE YOU --A HERO!

YOU CAN'T JUST MURDER ME-- IN COLD BLOOD!

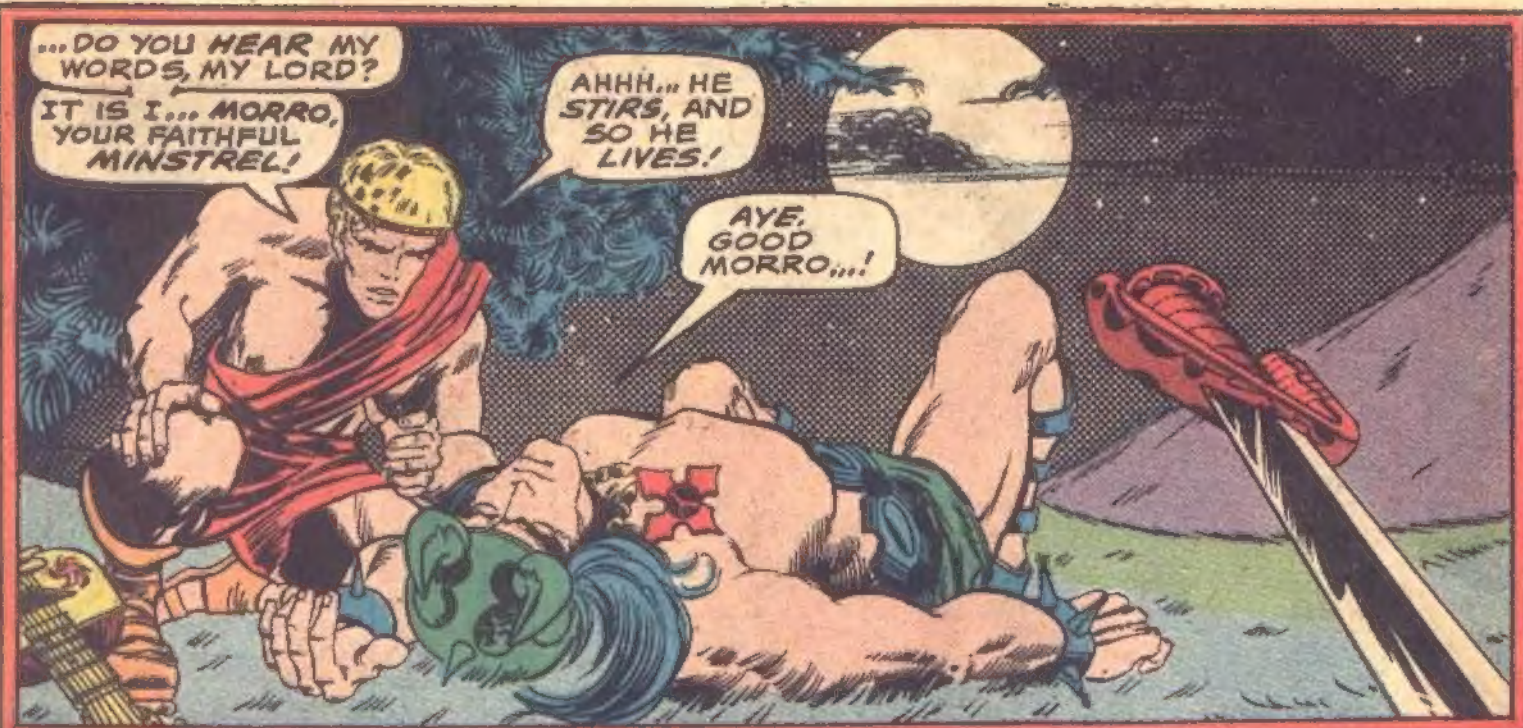
AND WHO WOULD DARE TO CALL IT MURDER, WIZARD--

--WHEN I KILL ONLY TO SAVE MY OWN LIFE??

Trull
his incanta
which glowed in the
speak forbidden
Trull's eyes stare
unconscious barbar
sword stru

in a
horror at
At the tou
s crashed d

upon the so
now only a gruesome
ed by the spell to finish
death to Starr.
The wizard's bones disas
the wind. Zardath would
of the Demon-Spawn. But...
Starr the Slayer voy
rule...no more!
The End

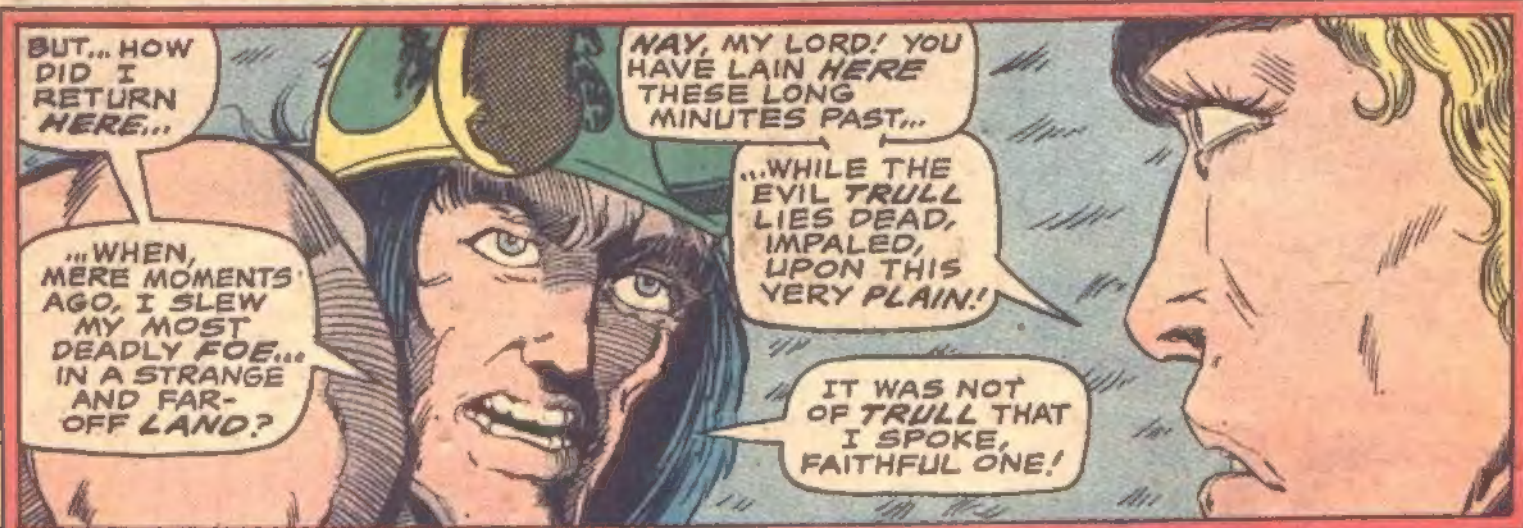


...DO YOU HEAR MY WORDS, MY LORD?

IT IS I... MORRO, YOUR FAITHFUL MINSTREL!

AHHH... HE STIRS, AND SO HE LIVES!

AYE, GOOD MORRO...!



BUT... HOW DID I RETURN HERE...

...WHEN, MERE MOMENTS AGO, I SLEW MY MOST DEADLY FOE... IN A STRANGE AND FAR-OFF LAND?

NAY, MY LORD! YOU HAVE LAIN HERE THESE LONG MINUTES PAST...

...WHILE THE EVIL TRULL LIES DEAD, IMPALED, UPON THIS VERY PLAIN!

IT WAS NOT OF TRULL THAT I SPOKE, FAITHFUL ONE!



FOR, I HAVE DREAMED A DREAM... A VISION OF CITIES OF GLASS AND GLEAMING METAL...

A WORLD WHERE I FOUGHT MY GREATEST, MOST FATEFUL BATTLE... FOR MY VERY SOUL ITSELF!

BUT YOU WON, MY LORD... YOU WON!

TELL ME OF THIS DREAM, THAT I MAY COMPOSE A SONG OF IT!

PERHAPS I SHALL, MINSTREL... ONE DAY!

NOW COME... FOR THE CITY AWAITS ITS RIGHTFUL KING!!

"...AND STARR THE SLAYER DID RETURN UNTO HIS SILVER-SPIRED PALACE...AND THERE DID RULE WISELY AND JUSTLY TILL THE END OF HIS DAYS... AND THEY WERE MANY."
--THE CHRONICLES OF ZARDATH.

INCREDIBLE, INEDIBLE INFO TO STUN YOUR SIX SENSES AND SOOTHE YOUR SECRET SOUL!

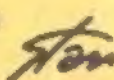
ITEM! January 5, 1972! Mark that date in your memory-book, faithful one — 'cause that's the night the batty Bullpen got it all together at Carnegie Hall, in the hectic heart of New York City! As we told you last month, the whole magilla was called "A MARVEL-IOUS EVENING WITH STAN LEE" — and it was a way-out compendium of music, magic, and madcap Marvel mayhem! Smilin' STAN himself was Master of Ceremonies — presiding over the frantic goings-on and reading dynamic dialogue from some of his greatest masterpieces, while images of mighty Marvel superheroes flitted across a giant movie-screen. A trio of our titanic artists got into the act, too, as Jazzy JOHNNY ROMITA, Happy HERB TRIMPE, and Big JOHN BUSCEMA did sensational sketches of Captain America, ol' Greenskin, and Thor — which in turn were projected onto that selfsame screen. (There was a passel of our cavortin' characters in actual attendance, too, including Spidey, Daredevil, Doc Doom, and even J. Jonah Jameson himself!) The standing-room-only crowd exploded with applause, also, at the roster of famous names who had gathered to pay homage to the madness that is Marvel: World-famous film director ALAIN RESNAIS translated a few of the Silver Surfer's most awe-inspiring soliloquies into his native French; and there were also a few pungent paragraphs about our heroes which were intoned by radio personalities ALEX BENNETT and EARL DOUD, by actors RENE AUBERJONIS and CHUCK McCANN (you've seen the latter a zillion times as the "Hi Guy" neighbor on the other side of the medicine cabinet in those Right Guard commercials), and neo-journalist TOM WOLFE, resplendent in red, white, and blue as he read about — you guessed it — Captain America. As for the music we mentioned above, most of it was provided by the far-famed CHICO HAMILTON PLAYERS — but some more Marvel madmen got into the act, too, as Hectic HERBIE and Bashful BARRY SMITH plunked a couple of wild electric guitars while Rascally ROY THOMAS belted out a rousin' rocker or two! Then, for the grand finale, just about everybody in the whole blamed Bullpen crowded onto stage to sing the Merry Marvel Marching Society theme-song — while, not to be outdone, dozens of cheering fans rushed onstage as well, and the show closed amid a revel of handshaking and autograph-signing all 'round. And that was that! All in all, it was a wildly successful evening — and not necessarily the last of its kind, either! And, if there were a few bleary eyes and sore throats among the Bullpenners come the morning of the 6th — well, that's show biz, people!

MARVEL-IOUS MINI-ITEMS: We've just barely got room to tell you about a

STAN LEE'S SOAPBOX

Whoa! Hold it! Stop everything! Before you pick up your pen to add to the thousands of angry letters we've already received, give us a chance to explain! It seems that almost everyone out there in Marvel-dom Assembled has written to castigate us for not printing announcements of our Carnegie Hall show right here in our mags, so that you could have known about it ahead of time. Unfortunately, it was impossible because our mags had already gone to press before the date was decided upon by both Carnegie Hall and our producer — and once all the arrangements had been made it was too late to get another date. But, don't lose faith, Believer! All is not lost! Luckily, a recording was made of the whole senses-shattering spectacle, and we're gonna try to turn it into an album which we'll offer for sale as soon as we can work out all the dazzling details. So, if you can bear the suspense, watch this space in the months to come — save your pennies — and tune up the ol' turntable, 'cause the best is yet to be!

Excelsior!



heaping handful of surprise goodies coming your way this month — so here goes — • DR. STRANGE is back! Ol' STAN has joined forces with baneful BARRY to spin a whole new series of black-magic yarns about the most mysterious hero in the history of comix, in the now-on-sale ish of MARVEL PREMIERE! • Not to be outdone, Happy HERBIE (there's that name again!) has teamed up with Melancholy MIKE FRIEDRICH to present a spanking-new series of adventures of the ever-astonishing ANT-MAN, in the pages of the current MARVEL FEATURE! • And, just in case you're wondering whatever happened to our rapturously-received DEFENDERS and WARLOCK strips — well, just wait a few weeks and see for yourself, forbearing one! • KULL THE CONQUEROR is back in his own full-length mag, as well — depicted by the startling SEVERIN Siblings (who else?) — just in time to help us celebrate the return of our epoch-making CONAN THE BARBARIAN mag to regular monthly publication! • And, just to top off all the shenanigans, famous fantasy author HARLAN ELLISON has plotted a special issue of THE AVENGERS, which in turn has been ably illustrated by Marvel's newest star artist, riotous RICH BUCKLER • More you could ask for, in one short 30-day month? Stick around till next time, pilgrim! Mighty Marvel is really on the move again!

THE MIGHTY MARVEL CHECKLIST

Now On Sale!

FANTASTIC FOUR #124: From the stars he first came — and now he returns, to menace the earth as never before! The Monster of the Lost Lagoon!

SPIDER-MAN #110: No jail can hold him! Make way for the wildest new villain ever — the Gibbon!

THOR #201: The wondrous wind-up to the battle for the soul of Odin! Heim-dall's mysterious quest on earth! All this, and Ego-Prime, too!

AVENGERS #101: Our awesome assemblers face a foe who must murder five innocent people — or the earth will die!

HULK #153: The Hulk on trial! Matt Murdock for the defense! A zillion surprise guest-witnesses! And then — but, you've gotta see for yourself!

CAPT. AMERICA and THE FALCON #151: Two of Marvel's mightiest — against a pair of sinister super-villains! The Scorpion and Mr. Hyde! 'Nuff said?

SUB-MARINER #51: The return of Prince Byrrah, pretender to the throne of Atlantis! Plus, the baneful Badoon!

DAREDEVIL #89: Death in the wind-lashed sky! Electro and Killgrave gang up against the Man Without Fear!

IRON MAN #48: Remember Firebrand — one of Marvel's most unique super-baddies? Well, he's back — and his target for today is ol' Shellhead!

CONAN THE BARBARIAN #16: The Night of the Frost-Giants! Conan battles alone — against towering titans! Crom!

KULL THE CONQUEROR #3: Even King Kull has never faced a threat like — Thulsa Doom! With the most cataclysmic climax in recent memory!

MARVEL TEAM-UP #3: What can even Spidey and the Torch do — against the super-powered vampire called Morbius?

TOMB OF DRACULA #3: At last — the mind-wrenching secret of Dracula's coffin! Plus — Dr. Van Helsing!

MARVEL FEATURE #4: What's it like to be trapped inside an insect-sized body? Don't answer till you read what happens to Hank Pym — the Ant-Man!

MARVEL PREMIERE #3: By popular request — nay, demand! Dr. Strange, master of magic, returns in a series of all-new, all-great thrillers!

CREATURES ON THE LOOSE #18: Gullivar Jones, Warrior of Mars — in deadly combat with Phra!

AMAZING ADVENTURES #13: The Brotherhood of Evil Mutants strikes again! But is the bludgeoning Beast against them — or with them?

SGT. FURY #100: The blockbuster you've been waiting for! The hard-hitting Howlers — as they were then — as they are today! Offbeat!

Plus — **RED WOLF #2.** Don't miss this one!



WESTERN SEA



BARACHA ISLES

ISLE OF THE BLACK ONES

THE HYBORIAN AGE OF CONAN

FROM A MAP PREPARED BY
ROBERT E. HOWARD

VANAHEIM

AESGAARD

HYPERBOREA

TUNDRAS

CIMMERIA

PICTISH WILDERNESS

BORDER KINGDOM

BRYTHUNIA

NEMEDIA

GUNDERLAND

GALPARAN

TAURAN

TANAGUE

BOSSONIAN MARCHES

BLACK RIVER

THUNDER RIVER

SHIVER RIVER

KURATIA RIVER

POITAN

TARANTIA

BEVERUS

AMORIAN BORDER

STEPPES

DESERTS

HYRKANIA

TO KHITAI

TO VENDHIA

AGRAPUR

YUETSHI

FE. GHORI

ZAMBOLLA

KUTHCHEMES

XAPUR

ZAPOROSKA RIVER

ISLE OF IRON STATUES

VILAYET SEA

TURAN

ZAMORA

SHADIZAR

CORINTHIA

OPHIR

KOTH

KHAURAN

KHORAJA

SHEM

MEADOWS CITIES

KHEAN

RIVER STYX

STYGIA

SUGHMET

KUSH

DARFAR

KESHAN

XUTHAL

XUCHOTL

ZACHAR RIVER

GRASSLANDS

BLACK KINGDOMS

PUNT

ZEMBABWEI

SPECIAL NOTE:
IN ANSWER TO A
MIGHTY MULTITUDE
OF REQUESTS, HERE'S
BASHFUL BARRY
SMITH'S OWN MAP OF
THE KNOWN WORLD
IN CONAN'S TIME!
KEEP IT HANDY,
HEAR?

